



2012-2016 MASTER PLAN

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Executive Summary

Within this Master Plan, several key projects and dreams have been identified. Warsaw is a community that has vision, the ability to look into the future and set goals to attempt to reach the recreational needs for generations to come. It is obvious that a city the size of Warsaw cannot justify or support an extensive park system consisting of play lots, neighborhood, community and regional facilities as found in larger cities. A park and recreation system must be established in terms of needs and financial resources of the community. Listed in the Action Plan are key projects and dreams that have been incorporated into this Master Plan. Some dreams may not get started, but if they never begin they can never be finished. Warsaw is a community with vision, dreams and commitment.

The following guidelines have been established for developing a park and recreational system in Warsaw. These guidelines were parts of previous Master Plans and are still valid today.

Development Guidelines

- *Park and recreation development and site acquisition priorities shall correspond to population growth and densities.*
- *The sites shall be designed and maintained attractively and, as far as possible, in their natural state.*
- *The economics of development and maintenance should not be a burden on the tax base of the community.*
- *The sites should be capable of reasonable management and not contribute to impairment of public health and safety, or detract from the neighboring properties.*
- *The size of the site should be large enough to provide for a variety of facilities.*
- *All park sites, facilities and programs shall incorporate universal design principles to provide accessibility for all users.*

The City of Warsaw has a long tradition of meeting the leisure and recreation needs of its residents. The Warsaw Parks and Recreation Department oversees and manages 15 parks with over 168 acres of open space and provides recreation programs that serve over 20,000 people each year.

The Warsaw Parks and Recreation Department is facing several significant challenges. Changing demographics have increased the need for recreation programs, neighborhood parks and open space. There is also the need to maintain and upgrade aging park facilities. These issues along with the financial challenges must be effectively addressed in order to maintain and enhance the high quality of life that residents of Warsaw enjoy and expect.

While it is difficult to forecast the future needs or trends of recreation, the following are important needs in park and recreation master planning:

- *An understanding of the importance and value of recreation and leisure in our ever-changing world.*
- *The appreciation of our natural resources and the knowledge to preserve and conserve them.*
- *Fitness of the mind and body.*
- *Vision, imagination and creativity.*
- *Integrity, sensitivity and common sense.*
- *A political keenness and perception.*

The Warsaw Parks and Recreation Department must take the position that it cannot be everything for everyone. The Department must be driven by the market/demand and stay with the department's core mission. By altering its role as direct provider, the Park Department will save money as it decides whether to provide a particular facility or program. Savings could be realized through partnering, outsourcing, or deferring to another provider of a service and/or facility.

Park Foundation

Park Foundations are typically established to support and expand opportunities for land preservation, park development and programs; and strive to help in educating the community and visitors about the city's parks and programs.

It is suggested that the Warsaw Parks and Recreation Department look into establishing a steering committee comprised of local residents to study the potential to organize and establish a non-profit, tax-exempt park foundation in Warsaw whose primary purpose is to acquire properties and accept gifts for use in the City's park system.

Mission

Warsaw Parks Foundation improves, expands, creates, and connects parks and green spaces, building a more vibrant community.



Method of Approach

Planning is an important process for directing the future at many levels in our society. Governments plan through legislative and executive process. Corporate groups plan for efficiency and productivity. Labor groups plan by contract negotiations with management. Families plan by availability of economic resources through a budget. Parks and Recreation Departments must plan by demand and need based on available funding and resources.

This planning is accomplished through the development of a Master Plan. The Warsaw Parks and Recreation Master Plan is a very important guide that has distinct objectives.

- 1. It helps to determine the park and recreational needs of the residents of Warsaw; and, identify sites or areas to meet these needs and to develop methods and programs to preserve and/or develop these sites and areas.*
- 2. It will aid the Warsaw Parks & Recreation Department in recognizing the importance of wise utilization and preservation of its natural resources.*
- 3. It will help to broaden the Warsaw Parks & Recreation Department's view of itself in terms of the use of these natural resources for recreational activities.*
- 4. It will assist the Warsaw Parks & Recreation Department in recognizing the importance of good fiscal planning in the utilization of public funds.*

The nucleus of any Park and Recreation Master Plan is public input. Input from the public was sought to help identify the “demand and need” of leisure and recreational activities in the City of Warsaw. It was through a “hands on” approach that the attempt was made to reach as many residents as possible to identify their wants, needs and desires for park and recreational activities in Warsaw. Input was gathered from the community through the use of written survey, a series of public meetings, staff work sessions and discussions at monthly Park Board meetings. The final result was the development of a park and recreation master plan for the City of Warsaw based on needs of the community.

The Warsaw Parks and Recreation Master Plan is intended to be a guide for park and recreational opportunities in the community. The method of approach and planning process offered insight into the changing needs, trends and events of the past. This master plan is based on current and specific data, policies and goals established at this time. Warsaw, like most other areas of Indiana, will continue to change and develop. The planning process needs to be continuous and receptive to changes of conditions, new demands and needs, and new opportunities. This 2012-2016 Master Plan should not become a *final plan*, but it should be used as a tool and a guide for implementation of the action steps and recommendations contained herein and should be subject to re-evaluation as changes occur. It should become an on-going process with the Park and Recreation Department conducting “annual reviews” to facilitate future actions thus always being in the first year of a five-year plan.

Key Issues

The focus of this Master Plan is, first and foremost, to maintain and improve the resources we have. Much of the proposed actions and recommendations are devoted to repairs, maintenance and program improvements. Funds for these projects will come mainly from the Parks and Recreation general budget. Grants, user fees, partnerships, gifts and donations will also help make these projects a reality.

The key issues identified in the planning process were:

- Funding for park operations, maintenance and programs
- Renovation, improvements and maintenance of existing park facilities
- Trails and greenways development
 - specifically expanded involvement of the Park Department with the Lake City Greenway
- Provide more recreational and education opportunities
 - particularly programs for young children and special events/concerts/festivals
- Promote healthy and positive lifestyles
- Environmental education and stewardship
 - “Green living”
 - Lake safety
- More effective promotion of park activities and events
 - Development of Park Dept. website
 - Signage and announcements

Budget

Due to changes in property tax structures in the State, budgets of cities, towns and counties may be greatly affected. The Warsaw Parks and Recreation Department will be challenged in the coming years to meet the needs of the community as the changes are implemented. Streamlining operations and expenses while pursuing additional revenue sources and grants will be a primary focus of the Warsaw Parks and Recreation Department.

The following recommendations are suggested:

- 1) *Require all recreational programs be self-supporting as much as feasible.*
- 2) *Re-evaluate rental/usage fee schedule annually.*
- 3) *Investigate the possibility of a cumulative building fund account.*
- 4) *Work closely with local organizations, businesses and foundation on special projects.*

Existing Parks and Facilities

Preserve, protect and maintain existing parks and facilities were key issues identified. Main concerns focused on trails, picnic areas (shelters and restrooms) and general maintenance and clean-up.



Expanding Recreational Programs

Additional and more diverse recreational programs were identified by the public as a need. The challenge to the Park Department is to identify those program opportunities and implement them.

The following recommendations are suggested:

- 1) *Expand private-public partnerships to enhance recreational programs.*
- 2) *Solicit input from teens to identify specific programs that would be of interest.*
- 3) *Expand and improve the use of the Park Department's web site for program announcements and program evaluations and registrations.*
- 4) *Continue outdoor concerts, special events and festivals.*
- 5) *Expand programming for elementary school age children.*

In the summer of 2011, the Boys & Girls Club of Kosciusko County vacated their space in the Pete Thorn Center. This opened the opportunity for the Warsaw Parks and Recreation Department to relocate the Recreation / Activities office from Boggs Building to the Pete Thorn Center. This change will provide opportunities for expanded programming. The gym will allow for year round indoor programs. The facility is also shared with the Senior Activities Center which may offer additional program opportunities.

Park Facilities

Additional and new park facilities were identified by the public as a need. The challenge to the Warsaw Parks and Recreation Department is to identify funding opportunities and develop them.

The following recommendations are suggested:

- 1) *Develop canoe/kayak rentals and launches.*
- 2) *Establish ice skating area(s).*
- 3) *Develop water splash pad(s).*
- 4) *Additional picnic sites and shelters.*

Trails

Become more involved with the development of the Lake City Greenway, especially with connections to park sites. The challenge will be to secure funding and grants for implementation.

The following recommendations are suggested:

- 1) *Work on development and implementation of trails within Warsaw.*
- 2) *Search funding opportunities for trails and greenway development.*
- 3) *Conduct review of the Lake City Greenway for opportunities to connect to city park sites.*



Land Acquisition

There are several key areas for land acquisition to help address the deficiency of park land in Warsaw. In addition, land adjacent to existing parks should also be a priority for acquisition as opportunities arise.

The following recommendations are suggested:

- 1) *Acquire 20+ acres for a new community park.*
- 2) *Acquire and develop new mini-parks and/or neighborhood parks on north and east sides of town.*
- 3) *Acquire trail and greenway corridors as they become available.*

Nighborhood Park Development

As a goal to provide recreational opportunities to all residents of the community, improvements to neighborhood areas are needed. Schools can provide a recreational outlet with their playgrounds and open play fields. Coordination and cooperation with schools and the Park Dept. can help improve existing playgrounds and opportunities.

East side of Warsaw is an area of town with established housing and no public park and limited recreational opportunities being provided. Lincoln Elementary School provides limited recreational opportunities. It should investigate possible land acquisition for development of a neighborhood park.

North side of Warsaw is an area of town experiencing growth with no public park and limited recreational opportunities being provided. There is a need for park development, such as a small picnic shelter and playground for the children in the neighborhood. It should investigate possible land acquisition for development of a neighborhood park.

Staffing

The goal of the Park and Recreation Board is to provide adequate staffing at the levels required to provide and maintain quality parks and program opportunities in Warsaw. A key issue identified in the public meetings and written survey was additional and improved recreational programming. It is recommended that a year-round part time Recreation/Activities and Office Assistant position be fulfilled. This would allow the Warsaw Parks and Recreation Department to grow and offer additional recreational programming to the community as well as adding a backup to the Park Office to fill in for vacation and sick days. Also recommended in the Action Plan is the addition of a park maintenance laborer to help meet the growing needs of maintaining the parks.



Long Range Vision

Summary of ideas, concepts and dreams of future park and recreation opportunities.

- **Planning:** Develop and maintain a comprehensive master plan which provides direction for the future operations of the Parks and Recreation Department.
- **Parks and Recreation Facilities:** Plan, finance, develop and maintain quality parks and recreation facilities which meet the diverse leisure needs of participants of all ages.
- **Land Acquisitions:** Develop and implement a land acquisition strategic plan which gives to the community open spaces and greenways. Work with community partners on acquisition of potential park sites.
- **Recreation and Educational Programs:** Provide quality sports, recreational, cultural and educational programs and services which meet the needs of all age groups; and promotes a healthy lifestyle in the community.
- **Public Relations:** Improve the Department's image through effective and proactive public relations. Increase and improve communication with all participants, visitors and the community with increased opportunities for community input.
- **Customer Satisfaction:** Develop operation, monitoring and feedback systems which assure a high degree of customer satisfaction.
- **Personnel:** Adequately train, evaluate, support and provide a qualified team to operate and maintain the parks and facilities at a quality level.
- **Safety:** Provide a safe environment for park visitors and the Department personnel.
- **Finance:** Administer the Department's finances in a sound and accountable fiscal manner.

The success of this Master Plan will require:

Partnerships – as budgets tighten, it will necessitate increased levels of inter-departmental, inter-jurisdictional and public-private cooperation.

Patience and Perseverance – as resources are focused on specific priorities, patience and strong perseverance will be needed to stay the course.

Commitment – to support the master plan and funding sources for the implementation of the priorities to meet the growing needs of the residents of Warsaw.

While this parks and recreation master plan is a five-year plan for Warsaw, it should be used as a tool and a guideline for implementation of the action steps contained herein. The plan should be used throughout the next five years as a basis of decision making for the Warsaw Parks and Recreation Department. The plan should be kept up to date and reviewed on an annual basis, thus always being in the first year of a five-year plan.
